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PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1992-1993

QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION

Establishment of seven United Nations interim offices

Revised estimates under section 31, Public information

Seventeenth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on the establishment of seven United Nations interim offices (A/C.5/47/89). During its consideration of the report, the Committee met with representatives of the United Nations and of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), who provided additional information.

2. As the Secretary-General indicated in paragraph 2 of his report, the General Assembly, in paragraph 2 of part XVIII of its resolution 47/219, requested him to:

> "... re-submit a complete report on the establishment and operation of the seven United Nations interim offices, including staffing, project implementation and an integrated budget with full sources of financing, at its resumed forty-seventh session, in accordance with the relevant resolutions and decisions of the competent United Nations bodies regarding operational activities and public information activities and taking into account the views expressed by the Member States in the Fifth Committee on this issue during the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session."

3. In March 1992 the Secretary-General decided to establish integrated United Nations offices in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan, and, subsequently, in Georgia. The responsibility for the establishment of those offices, which are initially to focus on development

assistance and information support to those countries, had been entrusted to the Department of Public Information and UNDP.

4. The objectives and functions of the interim offices are summarized in paragraphs 16 to 19 of the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/47/89). The Advisory Committee was informed that the Secretary-General intends to submit a broad policy-oriented report to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session which would include a discussion, among other things, of the future status and role of the interim offices and, to that end, he has established a task force.

5. The administrative and financial arrangements and budgetary requirements are covered in paragraphs 20 to 30 of the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/47/89). Each interim office would have one United Nations representative and a deputy to represent the United Nations and its programmes as a whole. There would thus be a total of 14 Professional and higher-level posts (three D-1, one P-5 and three P-4) and 42 local field posts for the seven interim offices. The United Nations would provide for seven Professional posts (three D-1, one P-5 and three P-4) and seven local field posts (see A/C.5/47/89, para. 20).

6. The Secretary-General, in paragraph 21 of his report, states that the United Nations and UNDP had agreed in principle to share equally the start-up and recurrent operating costs for the seven interim offices, with the understanding that the United Nations share of such costs would not exceed $85,000 per office, or $595,000 for 12 months for the seven offices, plus $274,200 for extraordinary requirements for the office in Armenia. Furthermore, a provision of $200,200 would be required for general temporary assistance with regard to three Professional posts and $175,000 for seven local field posts.

7. The Advisory Committee notes in paragraph 22 of the Secretary-General's report, that UNDP would provide day-to-day administrative and financial support to the interim offices on behalf of the United Nations.

8. The details of the project cost estimates and sources of funding during 1992-1993 are provided in paragraphs 23 and 24 of the Secretary-General's report and are summarized in the annex thereto. As indicated in the annex, the estimated resource requirements in 1992-1993 for the seven offices totals $4,149,100. Of that total, $1,822,900 ($1,244,400 on a net basis) would come from the United Nations; $2,008,400 would be financed by UNDP ($1,400,900 from the UNDP Governing Council allocation, $450,000 from the application of indicative planning figure resources and $157,500 from other sources of funding) and $317,800 from payments by the Governments of the host countries for government local office costs. The Governments of the host countries would also provide suitable rent-free premises for the interim offices. The Advisory Committee received no clear indication of the basis for the United Nations 30 per cent share, nor is it clear why the United Nations share should be entirely funded from the public information resources.

9. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 14 of the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/47/89) that the Governing Council of UNDP, in resolutions 92/29 and 92/43 of 26 May 1992, 1/ approved an allocation of up to $3 million from within the approved 1992-1993 UNDP administrative budget for the financing of those offices.

10. With regard to the United Nations source of funding for those offices, the Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 31 of the Secretary-General's report that no activities were proposed for termination, deferral, curtailment or modification under section 31 of the programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 in order to finance the seven interim offices. Part of $1,822,900, the United Nations share of the cost on a full-cost basis would be met by temporary redeployment of staff, thus bringing the net requirement to $1,244,400. Consequently, the Secretary-General requests an appropriation of $1,244,400 from the United Nations regular budget in order to cover the United Nations share of the cost.

11. It is the view of the Advisory Committee, however, that the policy decision with regard to the financing of those offices from the regular budget has yet to be decided upon by the relevant intergovernmental bodies. That being the case, no mandate yet exists for the Committee to recommend funding from the regular budget.

12. Under the circumstances, the Advisory Committee recommends that the Secretary-General's report to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session should be considered by the Committee on Information and the Special Political Committee before it is submitted to the Fifth Committee. Such action as the General Assembly may take can then be reflected in the appropriate manner in the 1994-1995 programme budget. In the meantime, the Advisory Committee takes note of the initiative taken by the Secretary-General to establish those offices. The Committee recommends that the arrangements now in place should be considered provisional and exceptional and should continue until the General Assembly has taken a policy decision on the matter.

Notes

1/ See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1992, Supplement No. 8 (E/1992/28), annex I.